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Small-Scale Agriculture Today

Office for Small-Scale Agriculture



Summer 1991

U.S. Department of Agriculture - Cooperative State Research Service - Agricultural Research For A Better Tomorrow

AT ISSUE...YOU BETCHA

When Midwesterners say, "You betcha," it means a great big YES. You betcha is a pledge of support, a willingness to pitch in, a promise to help out. And in the Midwest, people have long depended on themselves and their neighbors.

Take North Dakota for example. Like everyone else, North Dakotans are doing all they can to attract new money. No State is more dependent on agriculture, and three consecutive years of drought have once again demonstrated to North Dakotans the need to diversify their economy.

In addition to luring new business and industry to North Dakota, much more needs to be done to develop and expand business and industry already at home in the State. In particular, we need to find new sources of income for our farmers and ranchers-income that would allow more people to stay on their farms.

Can the Midwestern States help their residents find a niche in the national and international marketplace? You betcha!

The proof was in Marketplace '89 - a joint effort of the North Dakota Department of Agriculture and U.S. Senator Kent Conrad's (North Dakota) office - which brought together ideas, expertise, and experience in developing onfarm industries and in diversifying farm operations.

Hundreds of people came to the State Fairgrounds in Minot on the 100th anniversary of North Dakota statehood to see exhibits and display booths of every kind. There were workshops and panel discussions on the very subjects aspiring business people need to know.

Most important, there was the opportunity for farmers to learn from others just like themselves, farmers who have successfully started small businesses and industries or who have added new and often unusual crops or livestock to their operations.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Marketplace '89 was the feeling of family. North Dakotans are few and far between,

and when they get together, a good time is usually in the offing. One of the State's leading agricultural journalists perhaps said it best when he described Marketplace '89 as "an event that resembled a huge family reunion, pep rally, and farm show."

Originally, we had thought of Marketplace as a one-time shot, but the 2-day event hadn't even concluded before we were already thinking about how things could be done better. And thus Marketplace '91 was in the planning stages only a few months after Marketplace '89 had closed.

How did we make it better?

For openers we lowered the admission fees. We broadened the focus to include more rural development issues. And we put it all into a single day, making it possible for more people to take the time to attend.

We also looked over our list of guest speakers with a critical eye. In the Midwest, the definition of an "expert" or "consultant" is "some son-of-a-gun from out of town with a briefcase." Most of the speakers we had were of the local variety, with one major exception. Howard "Bud" Kerr, program director for USDA's Office for Small-Scale Agriculture, is so down to earth that he had no problem relating to our audience.

Bud urged his listeners to use common sense in approaching onfarm business and industry, and he reminded them that while there is a great deal of advice and assistance to be had, in the end everything is up to the manager.

"It will take a lot of effort by you as an individual . . . it's your decision."

We expected an increased turnout at Marketplace '91, and we got it. Attendance was more than doubled to 1,500-plus people, and the number of exhibitors and demonstrators increased significantly as well.

Best of all, the same family reunion atmosphere pervaded the Bismarck Civic Center -- just as it had the State Fairgrounds for Marketplace '89. Exhibitors gladly shared their hard-won

knowledge with potential competitors, and the more than 50 workshops and seminars were packed.

Expensive? Not at all. Marketplace '91 cost only about \$30,000, thanks in large part to the farm groups and volunteers who donated their time and services. Everybody pitched in.

And already we're hearing about results, as farmers and ranchers take their new-found knowledge and put it to work. New businesses are springing up, both on the farm and in our smaller communities.

Now, it's time to start thinking about Marketplace '92. Will it be better than ever?

You betcha! (Comments of Sarah Vogel, North Dakota Commissioner of Agriculture, April 16, 1991)

TOPICS AND TECHNOLOGY

"Be Careful" - Vapor drift is the movement of herbicide vapors or fumes. Crop injury from vapor drift depends on:

- the distance from the treated area
- the temperature
- the herbicide used
- the application rate
- the length of exposure, and
- the herbicide formulation.

TIP - For seeds, the rule of thumb for planting depth is four to six times the diameter of the seed.

Acre-foot - A family of five uses about an acre-foot of water a year. An acre-foot of water is 325,851 gallons, the amount that would cover 1 acre of land to a depth of 1 foot.

Published - Written for growers, manufacturers, and sellers of organic foods who realized they may have to make operational changes to meet the requirements of the new law, the "Guide to the U.S. Organic Foods Production Act of 1990" (23 pages) is available for \$10. Contact: Stuart Fishman, 5628 S.W. Miles Court, Portland, OR 97214; telephone 503-245-2309.

Dire Situation - "The number of dairy cows dropped from 10.8 million when the herd reduction program began in 1985 to 10.1 million in 1990, a 6.5-percent decline, while the average cow produced 12.5 percent more milk in 1990 than it did in 1985." (USA Today, March 15, 1991, p. 5A).

Result - "But more milk per cow means the government again is piling up dairy products, buying them at \$10.10 for 100 pounds. Farmers say production costs are \$11." (USA Today, March 15, 1991, p. 5A).

Beekeepers - Now available is a new super beehive carrier designed for two people to lift and carry hives smoothly and safely. Cost is \$47, postage paid. Contact: Dr. Howard Katz,

Bear Bottom Honey, 6818 Campfield Road, Baltimore, MD 21207; telephone 301-653-0314.

Organize - Detailed descriptions of the steps needed to organize a cooperative are given in the USDA Agricultural Cooperative Service (ACS) publication "How to Start a Cooperative." It can be ordered for \$2.25 from USDA-ACS, P.O. Box 96576, Washington DC 20090-6576; telephone 202-245-5356.

TIP - Pick no melon before its time!

Specialty - A new sweet potato variety is white at maturity instead of the traditional orange and tastes much like a white Irish potato. The new variety is called Sumore. Contact Philip P. Dukes, USDA-ARS Vegetable Laboratory, 2875 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC 29414; telephone 803-556-0840.

Available - The proceedings of the 3rd National Conference (1990) on Specialty Cut Flowers costs \$25. Contact: Judy M. Laushman, Association for Specialty Cut Flower Growers, 155 Elm St., Oberlin, OH 44074; telephone 216-774-2887.

Berries - A wealth of information about raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries is packed into the 20-page quarterly newsletter *Northland Berry News*. The subscription is annual and costs \$15/year (1991); back issues are \$15/year or \$45/4 years. Contact: Paul M. Otten, Northland Berry News, 19060 Manning Trail N., Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047-9723; telephone 612-433-5850, Fax 612-227-0022.

TIP - If the fruit set on a peach tree is heavy; THIN! Thinning, in short, increases fruit size, improves fruit color and quality, reduces limb breakage, and improves the tree's vigor.

1867 - Reprinted and richly augmented, "Market Gardening For Profit" is now available. Written more than one hundred years ago, the 400-page book contains specifics on production, marketing, tools and other important considerations of small farmers, and costs \$26 postpaid. Contact: Keith Crotz, American Botanist Booksellers, P.O. Box 532, Chillicothe, IL 61523; telephone 309-274-5254.

TIP - In late August, after they have finished blooming, divide day lilies, peonies, irises, and other herbaceous perennials for replanting. Be sure to keep the newly divided plants thoroughly watered.

Norway Maple - One of the 5 most popular shade trees in the United States is often killed by Verticillium wilt. However, Norway Maples that are resistant to the wilt may be closer to reality. Two varieties, Jade Green and Parkway, have some tolerance to the fungus. Contact: Alden M. Townsend, U.S. National Arboretum, 3501 New York Avenue, N.E., Washington, DC 20002; telephone 202-475-4824.

Income Opportunities - A 25-minute video cassette that is essentially a "sampler" of alternative enterprise opportunities available from the land costs \$15 per copy. Make check payable to West Virginia University Foundation. Contact:

William N. Grafton, West Virginia University, 307 Percival Hall, P.O. Box 6125, Morgantown, WV 26506-6125; telephone 304-293-4797.

Weed Seeds - Reduce the risk of spreading weed seed from field to field by cleaning (washing) equipment prior to moving it to the next field.

Communication - Fibernet is a computer bulletin board that gives producers and marketers from different sections of the industry a direct means of access. For more information send "self addressed stamped envelope" to: Ron Parker, Fibernet, Route 1, Box 153, Henning, MN 56551-8740; telephone 218-583-2419.

Save Water - Simple, cheap, easy-to-make-at-home covers for livestock water supplies are possible. For instructions on how to build the covers, contact: Allen Dedrick, USDA-ARS, Irrigation and Hydraulics Research, U.S. Water Conservation Laboratory, 4331 E. Broadway Road, Phoenix, AZ 85040; telephone 602-379-4356.

Hungry? - In 1700, one farmer fed three people. "Today, each U.S. farm family grows enough to feed 93 others." (The Cotton Gin and Oil Mill Press, October 6, 1990, p. 15).

TIP Always take any waste monofilament line (fishing line) away from the pond for proper disposal. Discarding carelessly could hurt wildlife, livestock, or boat motors if they get tangled in it. Monofilament line takes years to deteriorate.

Fertigation - Fertilize as you irrigate through drip or conventional sprinkler systems. A comprehensive drip irrigation products catalog costs \$1. Contact: Thomas Strong, Trickle Soak Systems, 8733 Magnolia, Suite 100, Santee, CA 92071; telephone 619-449-6408.

Definitions - Copies of the booklet, "A Glossary of Food and Agricultural Policy Terms 1989," Agricultural Information Bulletin No. 573, are available for \$5.50 each. Contact: ERS-NASS, P.O. Box 1608, Rockville, MD 20849-1608; telephone 1-800-999-6779.

Something New - Nicosulfurn (Accent) controls a weed called field sanbur in corn fields and also redroot pigweed. For more information, contact: Randy Anderson, USDA-ARS, Central Great Plains Research Station, P.O. Box 400, Akron, CO 80720; telephone 303-345-2259.

FREE - Computer-based information, PENpages User Guide details computer set-up and access instructions. Contact: Deborah Shaffer, Computer Services, 405 Agricultural Administration Building; University Park, PA 16802; telephone 814-863-3449, Fax 814-863-7209.

TIP - Having a honing stone handy to keep hoes and shovels sharp as you use them is a good practice. A file will work, but it doesn't leave the slight sawtooth edge that the honing stone does.

Up, Up, Up - "Organically grown products soared from \$175 million in 1980 to \$1.5 billion in 1990. Sales are expected to continue swelling amid the consumer health craze and the 'Green Wave' of interest in conservation, said John Eldredge, Vice President of Earth's Best, a company that markets organic baby food." (Journal of Commerce, April 15, 1991, p. 13A)

Herbs - Fennel is considered one of the most effective lures of beneficial insects among all flowers, wild and cultivated. Other herbs whose flowers will most help attract the good bugs include cilantro, dill, and parsley, a biennial that will bloom only in its second year.

Today - "Young farmers under age 35 represent only 13 percent of American farm operators. That's the lowest percentage in history." (Carolina Farmer, January 1991, p. 4)

Homegrown Tomatoes - Blossom-end rot can ruin your summer tomato harvest. A calcium deficiency and/or fluctuations in soil moisture are the probable culprits. To correct, spray the foliage and developing fruit with a solution of calcium chloride and place a thick layer of mulch around the base of the plants to regulate moisture and temperature.

Tree Injury - Lawn mower damage to trunks of shade trees is all too common. Solve this problem by putting down a mulch around the trunk so you don't mow too close to the tree.

Tools of Future - Four Winds Farm Supply deals in products to create a sustainable agriculture and the 1991-92 catalog is available for \$1, refundable with the first order. Contact: Prescott H. Bergh, FWFS - Dept SSA, Rt. 1 Box 206, River Falls, WI 54022; telephone 715-425-7037.

Makes Sense - There's no need to bag grass clippings; in fact, there are four main reasons why it is a good idea to leave grass clippings on the ground:

- Disposing of grass clippings takes up precious space in landfills.
- Clippings contain fertilizer elements, which are used by plants.
- Recycling nutrients reduces the need for fertilizer applications.

Clippings are made of organic compounds, which are needed by soil organisms to improve the tilth, or condition of the soil.

BOOK - Chicken Cookery, is compiled by the Delmarva Poultry Association. To obtain a copy, send \$2, check or money order. Contact: Connie Parvis, Delmarva Poultry, RD 2, Box 47, Georgetown, DE 19947-9622; telephone 302-856-9037.

(Mention of commercial enterprises or brand names does not constitute endorsement or imply preference by the U.S. Department of Agriculture)

Please Circulate

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 5-10, 1991 - Fourth International Mango Symposium, Miami Beach, FL. Contact: Jonathan H. Crane, University of Florida, IFAS, Tropical Research and Education Center, 18905 SW 280th Street, Homestead, FL 33031-3314; telephone 305-246-6393, Fax 305-246-7003.

July 19-22, 1991 - HERBS'91, International Herb Growers and Marketers Association Conference, Hyatt-Regency Hotel, Minneapolis, MN. Contact: Kathy Sebastian, IHGMA, 1202 Allanson Road, Mundelein, IL 60060; telephone 708-566-4566.

July 29-31, 1991 - National Livestock, Poultry and Aquaculture Waste Management Workshop, Western Crown Center Hotel, Kansas City, MO. Contact: Judy Brown, American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 2950 Niles Road, St. Joseph, MI 49085-9659; telephone 616-429-0300, Fax 616-429-3852.

August 9-11, 1991 - National Organic Farmers Association 17th Annual Summer Conference, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA. Contact: Julie Rawson, RFD 2, Sheldon Road, Barre, MA 01005; telephone 508-355-2853.

August 18-21, 1991 - The 2nd Conference on Agroforestry in North America, Holiday Inn University Plaza, Springfield, MO. Contact: Karen Powell, University Extension Conference Office, University of Missouri, 344 Hearnes Center, Columbia, MO 65211; telephone 314-882-2429.

August 23-24, 1991 - 1991 Dairy Sheep Symposium, University of California, Davis, CA. Contact: Ron Sundburg, P.O. Box 141, Linden, CA 95236; telephone 209-763-5711.

August 27-29, 1991 - American Cheese Society 8th Annual Conference, Le Meridien Hotel, San Francisco, CA. Contact: Bridgette Watkins, Food Work -- ACS, 34 Downing Street, New York, NY 10014; telephone 212-727-7939.

September 5, 1991 - International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movement (IFOAM) North American Regional Tom Harting, Jr., 125 West 7th Street, Wind Gap, PA 18091; telephone 215-863-6700.

October 6-9, 1991 - Second National Symposium: New Crops, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Indianapolis, IN. Contact: Jim Simon, Dept. of Horticulture, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907; telephone 317-494-1328.

October 14, 1991 - The World Pumpkin Weigh-off, The World Pumpkin Confederation (WPC), Collins NY. Contact: Ray Waterman, WPC, 14050 Gowanda State Road, Collins, NY 14034; telephone 716-532-5995, Fax 716-532-5690.

Send topics, technologies, and calendar of events (yours) to the Office for Small-Scale Agriculture (OSSA); telephone 202-401-4640. Dialcom-AGS3037 H. Kerr or Fax 202-401-5179.

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